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INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND ASSISTANCE TO ALLEVIATE THE CONSEQUENCES OF WAR IN CROATIA AND TO FACILITATE ITS RECOVERY
ASSISTANCE IN MINE CLEARANCE

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-eighth year

Letter dated 8 October 1993 from the Permanent Representative of Croatia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Republic of Croatia welcomes the initiative of the European Community to include the topic "Assistance in mine clearance" as a new item on the agenda of the General Assembly. As a country that has been devastated by war and continues to experience rehabilitative barriers as a consequence of the prolongation of that war, the Republic of Croatia can verify that there exists a pressing need to establish a mine-clearance programme, the lack of which holds grave consequences. The efficient implementation of a mine-clearance programme is vital to the economic recovery of any country struck by war. It is also crucial to post-war confidence-building measures and particularly important to the return of refugees and displaced persons, which in the Republic of Croatia holds the highest priority in rehabilitation.

To date nearly 1,000 square kilometres or nearly 300,000 hectares of land on the Republic of Croatia have been mined with an estimated 3,000,000 mines that vary in destructive potential and design. Nearly 1,400,000 grenades, cannon and mortar shells have been launched at the territory of the Republic of Croatia. Ten per cent of these devices have not yet been detonated and cover a surface area of 1,000,000 hectares, stretching from Slavonia to the farthest corners of Dalmatia. Attempts to clear mines and other explosive devices systematically from the terrain have thus far been fruitless.

In the war against Croatia, the Yugoslav army and Serbian insurgents have frequently used mine-tampering and terrorist tactics that do not comply with any international military code, thereby complicating the task of classic mine clearance. Practices include (a) strengthening the explosive dosage of TNT; (b) laying phosphorous beneath the mines; (c) shortening the length of the

detonation wire on trip mines; and (d) mining objects of great importance. Such innovative practices hinder early detection and visibility of devices by specialized personnel and have proven to be exceptionally dangerous as well as fatal to civilians. This is why concerned international organizations, such as UNICEF, are working with the Government of Croatia on developing a campaign that is targeted at informing civilians of such dangers.

The Republic of Croatia is plagued by complications resulting from the passage of two harvest cycles, leaving behind massive amounts of foliage and ground vegetation that hinder detection and can cause accidental detonation. These camouflaged minefields pose a grave threat to civilians and specially trained field personnel.

Croatia's economic potential is directly hindered because of the existence of land mines. In the agriculture sector Croatia has an annual net loss of 230 million United States dollars because of the great quantity of land that lies useless and paralysed as a consequence of mines. The logging and tourism industries have also suffered an additional loss of $70 million. Such a financial burden has crippled Croatia's potential to take care independently of all of its needs and has impaired the post-war recovery process.

After a series of studies, the Croatian Ministry of Reconstruction has compiled a study and a draft proposal of a programme for mine clearance. To date, Croatia has independently been able to remove approximately 35,000 mines from its pacified territories. This represents only 1 per cent of the total number of mines that occupy its land. Funding for this project has been spared by a very limited government budget. In the report "Project: Elimination of combat means (mines, dud ordinances) in Croatia as a precondition to recover the country", the Croatian Ministry of Reconstruction has estimated that the programme necessary to de-mine the Republic of Croatia would take an estimated nine years and involve an expense of nearly $400 million.

The success of a campaign for assistance in mine clearance in the Republic of Croatia hinges upon the international community and its willingness to provide financial, technical and staff support. The draft programme for the Republic of Croatia requires a systematic approach for long-term assistance; financial aid from the international community is therefore paramount to its execution and successful completion.

I ask for your kind assistance in circulating the present letter as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 103 and 155, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mario NOBILO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative